E5.F1

Forest Plan Consistency for the Pete King Project

Clearwater Forest Plan Consistency: The Pete King Project would be implemented in compliance with the Clearwater Forest Plan (CNF 1987). The Forest Plan was based on the requirements of the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976, and the NFMA implementing regulations found at 36 CFR 219. Forest Plan goals that relate specifically to the proposed project include:

- Manage the Forest's fishery streams to achieve optimum levels of fish production by: 1) maintaining high quality habitat in existing high quality streams, and 2) rehabilitating and improving degraded streams on certain developed portions of the Forest; and then maintaining the optimum levels (II-2).
- Manage habitat to contribute to recovery of each threatened and endangered species occurring on the Forest (II-2).
- National Forest lands fall primarily within Forest Plan Management Area (MA) E1, with inclusions of MA M2. Table 1 lists the primary emphasis and goals for each MA.

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Table 1 – Forest Plan Management Areas

Management Areas	**Acres**	**Direction**
E1	, less M2 inclusions	**Timber Producing Lands** – Manage to provide optimum, sustained production of wood products and viable elk populations while providing adequate protection of soil and water quality (Forest Plan, III-57).
M2	Inclusions	**Riparian Areas** – Manage under the principles of multiple use as areas of special consideration, distinctive values, and integrated with adjacent management areas to the extent that water and other riparian dependent resources are protected (Forest Plan, III-68).

Management of wildlife, fish, and sensitive plant habitats are also governed by direction contained in Title 2600 of the FSM. FSM 2602.1 specifies the following objective for managing biota:

- Maintain ecosystem diversity and productivity by:
    - Recovering threatened or endangered species.
    - Maintaining at least viable populations of all native and desired non-native wildlife, fish, and plants in habitats distributed throughout their geographic range on National Forest System lands.
    - Producing habitat capability levels to meet sustained yield objectives relative to demand for featured and management indicator species identified in RPA and Forest Plans.

FSM 2670.12 summarizes U.S. Department of Agriculture Departmental Regulation 9500-4, which directs the Forest Service to:

- Manage "habitats for all existing native and desired nonnative plants, fish, and wildlife species in order to maintain at least viable populations of such species."
- Conduct activities and programs "to assist in the identification and recovery of threatened and endangered plant and animal species."
- Avoid actions "which may cause a species to become threatened or endangered."

This and other direction in the FSM, as well as the goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines contained in the Forest Plan provide the regulatory framework against which the proposed project is analyzed in this report.

MIS

The Forest Plan standards relevant to MIS includes:

- Cooperate with Idaho Fish and Game, Indian tribes, and other agencies in the management of wildlife and fish habitat (II-24).
- …(M)anage all watershed systems in the Forest that are considered important for the fishery resource…to meet standards… (II-27)

Specifically for the project area, Appendix K of the Forest Plan provides water quality standards for project area streams, and identifies brook trout as the MIS for most of these streams. Table 5 shows the standards for project area streams.

Table 2. Fish/Water quality standards for watersheds within the White Pine project area

Stream	Standard	Channel Type	Indicator species	Approximate % Sediment Loading over Natural	Allowable Yrs. in 30 Exceeding Threshold	Desired Future Condition Cobble Embeddedness* (%)
Pete King Creek	Highly Fishable	B	Steelhead	350%	20	35%

* Jones and Murphy (1997)
** Standard revised or stream added in FP Amendment 10, April 1996.

Compliance with the water quality aspects of these standards is discussed in E5.H36 and E5F2. In particular, the “Minimum Viable” standards are easily achieved with this project (E5.H36 and Hydrology Section in the Pete King EA).

Forest Plan Stipulation Agreement: Litigation on the CNF Forest Plan resulted in a Stipulation Agreement (CNF, 1993. The Wilderness Society, et al., v. F. Dale Robertson, et al., Stipulation of Dismissal (Civil No. 93-0043-S-HLR)) that discusses what type of activities the Forest could proceed with and under what conditions. The Agreement states “The Forest Service agrees to proceed only with those projects that would result in no measurable increase in sediment production in drainages currently not meeting Forest Plan standards.” (Only those watersheds that do not meet fine sediment and/or cobble

embeddedness standards (a measurement of fine sediment prevalence), would trigger this portion of the Stipulation Agreement).

Robinson (2020), makes the determination that the action alternative for the project would cause no measurable increase in sediment production, however, so the project meets the terms of the Stipulation Agreement. In this project, the vegetative treatments and proposed road management are designed to meet the appropriate standards/criteria on their own merit, and road maintenance and improved culvert sizes should contribute toward stream channel fine sediment reduction (E5.F1).

The streams in the project area are currently (based on a 2019 Cobble Embeddedness (CE) survey) not meeting the forest plan desired condition standard for CE in Pete King Creek. Although a review of past data, professional judgment and recent qualitative field reviews indicates that the Pete King creek drainage is trending towards meeting the desired conditions (at the mouth of Pete King Creek) for cobble embeddedness given the long term history of protection of riparian areas through RHCA buffers and minimum levels of recent management activities, recent watershed restoration efforts and overall good conditions of the stream channel and habitat in the project area (E.5 F16). The 2019 surveys for Pete King Creek indicated that cobble embeddedness was at 50% but has fluctuated lower and higher over the past 25 years. This is likely do to the unique geology in the drainage. Therefore CE may not be the best matrix for indication of habitat quality within the drainage. PACFISH/INFISH Biological Opinion Monitoring shows improvement overtime in stream channels and fish habitat by maintaining RHCA buffers. Field reviews in 2019 confirm that riparian conditions are currently in good condition with minimal signs of disturbance and have likely improved overtime due to protection, inputs of large woody debris (LWD) (creates pools and complexity for fish), abundant streambank stabilizing vegetation and shade.

Regardless the proposed vegetative treatments are designed to meet the appropriate standards/criteria on their own merit, and the proposed road treatment should contribute toward stream channel fine sediment reduction and trends in fish habitat improvement including embeddedness (E5.H36) and would certainly not increase sediment loading measurably within the project area and therefore complaining with the CWNF forest plan.

The combination of continued hydrologic function and the improvement of National Forest system Roads, through maintenance and/or reconditioning, would accelerate the rate of meeting or trending towards improved water quality/fish habitat conditions for aquatic habitat which is consistent with desired conditions as stated in the Clearwater Forest Plan. 1987. pp. II-17.

Compliance with the water quality aspects of these standards is discussed in (Traeumer and Hovde 2019) Also See E5.H36.